



## H1N1 Partner Briefing

Date: October 14, 2009  
To: All Rhode Islanders  
From: Director of Health, David R. Gifford, MD, MPH  
Re: Information on H1N1 in Rhode Island

**Local Influenza Activity Level:** Regional<sup>1</sup>, H1N1 predominant circulating strain

**Rhode Island**<sup>2</sup>: 3 hospitalized cases, 0 deaths

**National Report**<sup>3</sup>: 16,258 hospitalized cases, 1,784 deaths

**Sentinel Surveillance (% of visits due to influenza-like illness)**<sup>4</sup>: Rhode Island: 2.6%, New England Region: 1.3%, Nation: 5.1%

### **Four new pharmacies distributing free Tamiflu to the uninsured**

The antiviral drug Tamiflu is now available for the uninsured at four independent pharmacies in Rhode Island, in addition to the chain stores already offering the medication. The new pharmacies are Newport Prescription Center (289 Broadway, Newport); Phred's Drug (1300 Oaklawn Ave., Cranston); East Side Prescription Center (632 Hope St., Providence); and Oxnard Pharmacy (198 Buttonwoods Ave., Warwick). These drugstores, as well as Rhode Island CVS, Rite Aid and Stop & Shop locations, are ready to fill valid prescriptions for Tamiflu with doctors' scripts stating "state supply." Patients with insurance will continue to be processed through their insurance plans. No additional voucher from the Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH) is needed. Tamiflu is typically prescribed to those experiencing severe flu symptoms, such as those requiring hospitalization. It may also be prescribed to sick people who are at high risk of flu-related complications.

### **Rhode Islanders urged not to call their doctors for H1N1 vaccine information**

HEALTH will continue to publish the most up-to-date information about the H1N1 virus and the state's vaccination distribution plan on its website ([www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov)). All Rhode Islanders will be informed about when particular populations are eligible for vaccination. Additionally, responders on HEALTH's H1N1 information line (222-8022) are qualified to address any concern about the vaccine, including those of Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking Rhode Islanders.

### **Rhode Island H1N1 vaccine strategy**

Rhode Island's H1N1 vaccine strategy focuses on vaccinating pregnant women and children first. This will be accomplished through a combination of school-based clinics for older children and office-based vaccination for younger children and pregnant women. All states have been allocated vaccine according to population and are working under limited early vaccine availability. We are aware that some states have included healthcare workers in their initial efforts, which must consequently delay complete vaccination of pregnant women and children. In Rhode Island, we hope that our approach will help to decrease the spread of H1N1 in the community early in the flu season while simultaneously protecting our most at-risk populations. Healthcare workers will be the focus of an intense vaccination effort in hospital-based clinics as soon as sufficient vaccine becomes available (anticipated by late November to December), to be followed shortly by more general vaccine distribution to the remainder of the population.

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<sup>1</sup> Rhode Island reported Regional activity for the week of October 4 to October 10, 2009. Influenza is circulating in 2 regions of the state. For details see <http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/about/surveillance/>.

<sup>2</sup> Influenza-associated hospitalizations and deaths since September 1, 2009

<sup>3</sup> Influenza and pneumonia-associated hospitalizations and deaths from August 30 to October 3, 2009

<sup>4</sup> Influenza-like illness activity from September 27 to October 3, 2009

**Individuals with certain health conditions face special challenges during flu season**

Individuals with certain health conditions may face greater challenges this flu season as they manage their existing medical needs while trying to fight the H1N1 virus. Such medical conditions include cancer, blood disorders such as sickle cell disease, chronic lung disease, diabetes, heart disease, kidney disorders, liver disorders, neurological disorders, neuromuscular disorders and AIDS and other immune system weakening conditions. In addition to taking the precautions that all Rhode Islanders are being urged to take, **these individuals should refill needed medications in a timely fashion and should keep the name, phone number, and office address of doctors or health care providers with them at all times.** For the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's full list of recommendations, see: <http://www.health.ri.gov/materialbyothers/InformationAboutTheFluIncludingH1N1ForPeopleWithCertainMedicalConditions.pdf>.

**H1N1 information and prevention measures available in 13 languages**

HEALTH's website offers information about the H1N1 virus and measures that Rhode Islanders can take to prevent its spread in Spanish, French, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Thai, Tagalog, Arabic, Chinese, Hmong, Khmer, Lao and Russian, in addition to English (<http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/languages/>). HEALTH responders who are manning the H1N1 hotline are prepared to answer questions in Spanish and Portuguese, as well as in English.

**Home-schooled children to be vaccinated in school-based clinics**

The parents of home-schooled children will be notified by the superintendent of the school district that their child is zoned to attend regarding dates and times of vaccination clinics. Home-schooled children will be vaccinated in the public schools that they are zoned to attend.

**Printable H1N1 materials available on HEALTH's website**

Interested partners can download and print a variety of educational materials about seasonal and H1N1 flu from HEALTH's website. To view flu prevention posters and brochures, see <http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/about/prevention/>. To view flu materials in other languages, see <http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/languages/>. A variety of targeted materials are also available on HEALTH's flu pages for pregnant women, parents and caregivers, and people at risk of flu-related complications. Partners should check these pages frequently, as HEALTH will continue to link to resources as they become available.

**Resources**

- HEALTH at <http://www.health.ri.gov>;
- Archived partner briefings and regular news updates: <http://www.health.ri.gov/news/flu/>
- H1N1 Information Line (M-F 8:30am- 4:30pm) 401-222-8022
- H1N1 email address [h1n1@health.ri.gov](mailto:h1n1@health.ri.gov)
- <http://www.flu.gov>